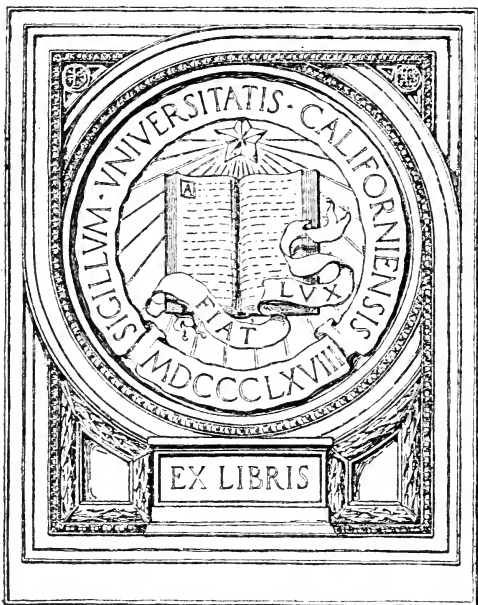


GIFT OF

Noxon Toomey



Wagabond Verse

By

Roxon Coomer



Published by
The University of Illinois Press

VAGABOND VERSE

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By

Noxon Toomey



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THE CRAZY SNAKE UPRISING—1909

Out in the burr land, intrenched in the sand,
Raided the Crazy Creeks—old Crazy Snake's band,

Indians dangerous and wild;

Believing the Council and Black Drink had lied,
They were unruly through error and pride,

Indians reckless and riled;

They defied quelling with rifle or talk
And at inducements surely would balk,

Indians wrongly beguiled.

Hence the intrepid Maskōkes assembled in groups
Raising a racket with rifles and bloodiest whoops,
Waiting 'till medicine sorcer^{ers} bewitched them to kill,
While in a dance to arouse a big warrior skill.

After the medicine dance and carousal were done
Black Drink assembled his braves for the fun

Bent in attacking the band of rebellious Creeks.

So the bewitched and determined set out on the trail
Leading to ambush and deadly lead hail.

Thus the detachments kept stealthily on,
Crawling thru gullies in darkness of dawn,

Following scoutsmen engaged in the work
Of finding the places where Crazy Creeks lurk.

When the attackers discovered old Crazy Snake's place
They quickly surrounded the bramblely space.

While the revolvers and rifles were barking out lead
Bravely the Maskōkes kept forging ahead

And captured all Crazy Snakes—living or dead.

Camp Pike, Arkansas,
July, 1918.

A TEXAS WIND STORM

Have you ever met a Texas storm
When it quickly starts to perform
A sort of diabolical reform?
Well, then, stranger, listen well
And I will very briefly tell
How a Texas wind storm whips
Instanter loose from ——
Well, it comes across ten townships
In lesser time than I can cuss,
And it rips and rips and rips
'Til everything is clean a muss
And you've breathed a peck of the ranche's crust.
For twenty minutes your baleing dust
From throat and eyes—and lots mo' wuss
'Tis to know your shakedown's going bust,
While you're buried under the sandy gust.
And you axe me what to do
When the 'tarnal wind is through?
Well fust dig out yourself and hoss,
Then ride around a mile or two,
Mebby you'll find some things you've los'.

Camp Stewart, Texas,
November, 1916.

MEXICO—TAKE WARNING!

You are bloody, you are cruel,
 Cruel, bloody Mexico!
On your towns the bandits ply,
In their streets the widows cry;
All your honesty's a lie—
 O Mexico.

You are sensual, you are rotten,
 Rotten, sensual Mexico!
You will level all to dust,
And your grafting leaders must
Die in sordedness and lust—
 O Mexico.

You are crumbled, you are humbled,
 Humbled, crumbled Mexico!
Your dictators' laws and lies
Vanish when the peons rise;
For Justice lives but Falsehood dies—
 O Mexico.

You are ignorant and hauty,
 Hauty, ignorant Mexico,
On you a nation's will is set,
And their arms will fell you yet—
For atrocities it can't forget.
Righteousness permits no tyrant's hall,
Indignation leaves no gibbet wall,
For they correct and conquer all—
 O Mexico.

El Paso, Texas,
July, 1916.

THE SERGEANT'S SWEETHEART

A True Tale—Mexican Border Concentration, 1916

First I'll write of regiments well manned,
Troops of thirty thriving states,
And how they spread on stretch of somber sand
At a troubled nation's gates,
All along the winding Rio Grande,
Made a mighty military hand,
Stretched to save degenerates.

These men from mart and meadow mustered, glad
Servants of a nation's need;
And readily responding, every lad
Sprung to follow captain's lead,
Thus honoring the parents made sad
When their boys departed to curb the mad
Chiefs' and bandits' guileful greed.

Quartered on a common camping ground,
And fellowed by a soldier's day,
Countless kinds of Clay and Class were found,
Leavened to a ranked array:
Sacrificing merchants, doctors, bound
With the careless, constant-pleasure hound,
And many loosing higher pay.

During the morning's hot and dragging hours,
Trode the troops on trackless plains
Strewn with shrub, mesquite and cactus flowers,
All thirsting for torrential rains—
From the fast collecting cloud that lowers
Off the mountain ridge that steeply towers
Into heaven's lambent lanes.

In the long and languid, listless nights,
Gathered groups of goodly friends,
Holding meeting under starry lights,
Listening to a tale that ends
Merrily in rousing drinking rites,
Or reveals the labor, love and sights
To which inclination bends.

Songs and showy stories alternate
With accounts of home and heart,
Or a nature-lover would relate
Why the lizards lightly dart,
(For a fly or from a foe), or wait
Motionlessly basking out their fate,
In a rocky, arid part.

One of the stories told about a maid
Whom a sergeant loved in years ago
And how he hid his hopes and heart, and paid
For all her whims, as tho' a pawn;
Then a better situation made
Him rich, but too late to give him aid
For the fickle girl was gone.

This narration led a lonely lad
To describe a Gift of Chance,
Which in recent hours had made him glad
Through a sunny, fetching glance.
She was charming, chaste and cause of mad
Love and hope in hearts however sad:
Verily she did entrance.

Such account attracted all intent
And sent two soldiers soon to see
The enchantress who had lent

Godliness to gayety.

First she would not meet them, but unbent,
When she learned that both were recent
Friends of full integrity.

What? The sergeant was the welcome guest!

For he found his former friend
In this girl, who gave, we're told, the best
Granted greeting that could mend
Former sadness in a lover, blessed
Again with hopes which he now confessed—
Hence by now she has his socks to mend.

Camp Stewart, Texas,
August, 1916.

CIUDAD JUAREZ

(Cuidad del Paso del Norte)

Near where a rolling range of mountains give
The shallow Rio Grande a pass,
There lies a village where the people live
By Mexico's dry Northern pass.

Its people come from ancient Spanish stock
With mixture of the Indian race,
And all their movements, thoughts and petty trade.
Are made in slow and fickle pace.

The village whitens under cloudless sky,
A flat and plain adobe mass;
It huddles on an arid mesa by
A clump of trees and prairie grass.

Its only beauty is at purple dawn,
Or evenings red and gliding close—
Then it seems to be by magic drawn,
A mountain valley's only rose.

Fort Bliss, Texas,
December, 1916.

THE NATIONAL HYMN OF MEXICO

A Translation

Mexicans at the loud cry of war,
Your swords and your steeds assemble,
For the earth to its center shall tremble
At the sonorous roar of the canon,
And the earth to its center shall tremble,
At the sonorous roar of the canon.

Raise, O Fatherland, thy olive bough temples:
The devine archangles of peace;
For in the heavens thy eternal lease
By the finger of God is written,
That in the heavens thy destiny's lease
By the finger of God is written.

But if boldly a hostile stranger,
Profanes with his heel thy fair lee;
Think, O Fatherland, how heaven will give thee
A soldier in each of thy sons,
A soldier in each of thy sons.

El Paso, Texas,
October, 1916.

HIMNO NACIONAL DE MEXICO

Mexicanos al grito de guerra,
El acero aprestad y el bridón,
Y retiemble en sus centros la tierra
Al sonoro rugir del cañón.
Y retiemble en sus centros la tierra
Al sonoro rugir del cañón.

Cina, oh patria, tus sienes de oliva,
De la paz el archángel divino
Que en el cielo tu eterno destino
Por el dedo de Dios es escribió
Que en el cielo tu eterno destino
Por el dedo de Dios es escribió.

Mas si osare un extraño enemigo
Profanar con su planta tu suelo,
Piensa, oh patria, querida que el cielo
Un soldado en cada hijo te dió,
Un soldado en cada hijo te dió.

THE GOLDEN HORN—A MEMORY

My mind tonight is far aflight
Musing on a gorgeous sight;
It is of Frisco's bay and gilded Horn
On a sierran summer morn,
When nature painted hills and sea
And gave America a Cashmeran lea.

Once I saw Palermo's lovely color plays,
And watched the hoary Alpine peaks in all their glory;
I've sailed Vesuvian and Dalmatian bays,
And had the Brunnig valley spread before me.
But among enchanting vistas I have seen,
I repine the one of Frisco's elfin scene.

Camp Pike, Ark.,
July, 1918.

THE HOSTESS HOUSE

Hid in a cool spot, shady and green plot
Close to the barrack array,
Lays the attractive, home-like and massive
Bungalow where women folk live—
Charming, snug Hostess House.

Giving a kind womanly home touch
Dear to the hearts of the boys; and
Gladly befriending the ladies and mothers
Who are out visiting husbands and brothers—
Cozy, bright Hostess House.

Camp Pike, Ark.,
August, 1918.

SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY FLEUR-DE-LIS SONG

The fleur-de-lis' royal blue,
Has long years stood for power
And grace and love and culture,
Rare blessings in a shower.
And beneath the glorious splendor
The blue and white doth shed
She is still a challenger
To those whom she hath led.
So through long years of college
With help at every turn
Comes the charm of erudition
For which we warmly yearn,
That we may win life's victories
And earn through our own U.
The choicest blessings of this life
To deck the white and blue.
That we may win life's victories
And earn through our own U.
The choicest blessings of this life
To deck the white and blue.

Chorus

As trials of life o'erwhelm us,
Turning fast our hair to white,
And cherished hopes deceive us
In Fortune's beguiling plight,
We'll forget our cares and sadness
And let memory wander free
To recall these days of gladness
Crowned by the fleur-de-lis.
To recall these days of gladness
Crowned by the fleur-de-lis.

St. Louis, Mo.,

July, 1911.

DELTA SIGMA THETA BANQUET SONG

Come along, and sing a song
Of happy days of yore
When we all were college chums
In search of classic lore.
Gather 'round and linger 'round
A good fraternal feast,
Swap some tales of college pranks,
A score or more, at least.

Tell again, and sing again,
Of care-free days now gone,
Of happy hours together spent
On campus, field or lawn.
Joke about and laugh about
Funny stunts and stags,
Relating all the curious deeds
Of chapter wits and wags.

Chorus

So then we'll drink, boys! drink!
To friendship that will last;
Happy whene'er we think
Of our brothers of the past.

And now we'll drink, boys! drink!
To comrades that are here,
And sing the songs that make us think
Of past events so dear.

St. Louis, Mo.,
September, 1911.

FOR A CHAPTER MEMORY BOOK

I'll burden not these tell-tale pages
With records of the weary strife,
For discomforts are soon forgotten
If not recalled to life.

Then let this book record the days
We spent in merriment,
And may it ne'r recall the days
Of willful devilment.

For this life is what we make it—
A day of pleasant thought
Or a life of endless misery
With sad memories fraught.

St. Louis, Mo.,
December, 1909.

BE INDUSTRIOUS

Life's troubled hours are passing fast,
The days soon slip away,
And man's strong arm must rest at last
So let it toil today.

Then let's improve our time today,
In every goodly way,
For which of us can hope to say
Our work will not repay.

If you respect the weak, and pray,
And labor hard each day,
Your future course will surely lay
Along a happy, honored way.

El Paso, Texas,
November, 1916.

LINES IN DESPONDENCY

When the reverses of failure are casting a toll
On the convictions and strength of your soul,
Let not ambition be blighted away
Or the intention to strive for that day
Crowned by the tasks of the larger and nobler roll
That is awarded a man in the fray.

For it is proven that manliness lays in a mind
That is atuned to a purpose and keeps at the grind;
Laughing at troubles and striving to serve
Wins approbations for those who preserve
Stoutness of heart and a strong inclination to find
Pleasure in toiling to strengthen their nerve.

Camp Dodge, Iowa,
June, 1918.

DEATH

Hope sinks into silence—the story is told—
The features are darkened, the heart's blood is cold.
A life is completed and closed like the day.
And God who gave it, hath taken it away.
Pale grows the visage, and snuffed is life's fire,
Grief fades into silence as loved ones retire.
Darker and darker the sad shadows fall,
As death's deep sorrow lays claim over all.
Mournfully, solemnly sounding its dole,
The funeral bell is beginning to toll.

St. Louis, Mo.,
January, 1910.

LINES ON MY MICROSCOPE

See that tube of burnished brass
With its doors of crystal glass!
Making an Aladin pass
 To dominions microscopic.

It reveals at my command
Structures of an unknown land,
Giving to a mortal's hand
 Franchise in a world exotic.

Its eye for deepest mystery,
And teachings free from sophistry,
Reveal the race's history,
 To delight the philosophic.

Offspring of ingenious mind,
Lifter of a pristine blind,
Ever ready like its kind,
 Yielding services dioptric.

This device with form and virtues fair,
Faithful searcher of life's hidden lair,
Claims tribute of praises rare,
 Instrument so scientific!

Boston, Mass.,
June, 1911.

PLEXIMETRY

Hear the tapping, tapping on a flattened chest,
And the rapping, rapping on a wasted breast;
How the striking over pulmonary zones
And the notes and pitch in dull and shortened tones
 Gives a fateful revelation of pulmonary excavation
 When the tuneless resonance wells.

With the falling, falling of an agile finger
Comes the knowledge why the cough and weakness
 linger,
 For the patient's consummation is a fatal infesta-
 tion,
 Of which the slow examination tells.
Thus by deft and clever tapping
We come to learn of what is sapping
 Strength and tissue fast away.

Philadelphia General Hospital,
June, 1916.

TO THE GIRL OF MY DREAMS

With joy your virtues I exalt,
Though unaware what they may be,
And then each charming little fault,
You may-hap have, is dear to me.

Sweetheart, I sure would praise
Your lovely eyes, if I but knew,
From meeting once their tolerant gaze,
What color forms their glorious hue.

And some mention of your hair
I'd like to make—its braid and curl—
But then, though you're my sweetheart fair,
Alas! you're still the unmet girl!

I wildly yearn to tell you how
I love the very thought of you,
For that is all I can love now—
Until you come within my view.

February, 1910.



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